

December 1999

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Information Technology Support Center
Division of Information Resources
Indian Health Service

ITSC News

ITSC Director's Corner

Rus Pittman

This is the first quarterly newsletter from the Information Technology Support Center (ITSC). Many of our customers had been asking for information on software development, upgrades and training opportunities. We hope that this newsletter, as well as our press releases and web site, will provide the information you need.

Over the past few months, we have been meeting with the Professional Specialty Groups (PSGs), the Information Systems Advisory Committee (ISAC), the Information System Coordinators (ISCs), and many Area, Tribal and Urban groups to focus the work of the ITSC. Our goal is to become more customer focused, customer driven, and to provide timely software and services. We have recently completed the ITSC FY 2000 Project Plan and its associated timelines and deliverables listings. We have produced an "RPMS Growth Path" document so that all our customers will understand how current and future development efforts progress toward a specific outcome. We have grouped our programmers into "panels" and increased our support to 24 hours/7days. These changes were done to provide greater continuity for the customer and to reduce the impact of staff turnover.

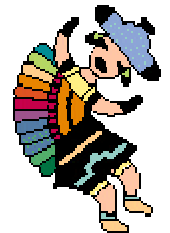
We are also pleased to announce that IHS/Tribal/Urban nationally supported

software and hardware systems are ready for

Year 2000 (Y2K) transition. We will have staff available 24 hours a day during the transition. We have set up our technical support site in Albuquerque with backup staff in Tucson.

You will find more information about these and other topics within this newsletter. The ITSC is committed to providing quality customer service. Please provide me with feedback at russell.pittman@mail.ihs.gov.

What's New With RPMS Applications?



This quarter has seen some significant patch and version releases:

Third Party Billing Vn. 2.4

Version 2.4 of the Third Party Billing is primarily a maintenance release including released version 2.3 patches 1 through 3 and unreleased patch 4. Also included in version 2.4 are two new features:

- ❖ The national standard format electronic HCFA-1500-E is included as a new mode of export
- ❖ Version 2.4 makes it possible to bill for visit locations as entered in PCC

using Parent/Satellite relationships defined in the Accounts Receivable package. This facilitates billing where it wouldn't make sense to set up a location in Third Party Parameters file for locations such as 'School' or 'Home'.

ARMS Patch 15

This patch fixes errors on the CORE system by putting the Pay/Collection Document Number into different positions and making sure the traveler's SSN is being placed in the correct positions of the ECS Treasury file for check payments.

Radiology Patch 5

This patch corrects pointers (how data is linked) to the Patient Care Component (PCC).

Contract Health (CHS) Patches 13 and 14

Patch 13 for CHS changed the process of data delivery. We went from a 1950s method of transporting data to a 21st century method that provides more accurate and timely transmission.

Patch 14 primarily corrected automation of the FTP process; that is, it can now find the software program to do the individual data transmission to CORE and Fiscal Intermediary and to download the EOBR from the Fiscal Intermediary (Blue Cross/Blue Shield).

News From the HQW Data Center...

Web Reports

On-line NPIRS reports have been a reality for over a month now. If you haven't tried it yet, use Microsoft Internet Explorer Vn. 4.0 or later to access the Headquarters West web page and then select the DPS Online

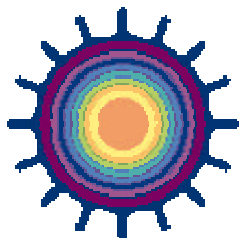
option, or you can go directly to <http://dpsntweb1.hqw.ihs.gov/>. We aren't stopping there. Changes are in progress that will make access faster, both to get your new data posted sooner and to have the reports take less time to run.

Scheduled Down Time

The main NPIRS computers will be unavailable for approximately two weeks at the beginning of January 2000. This is necessary to prepare for the web reporting improvements and to install new software. No new data will be posted during the down period. (New data will continue to be accepted, but will simply be held until the computers are available.)

FY98 Ambulatory Patient Care (APC) Validation

To avoid a possible two-week delay due to the scheduled downtime, a concerted effort is being made to complete the validation of FY98 APC data before the end of the year. At this writing, 10 of the 12 areas have approved their APC, and all areas have received their FY98 User Population figures to review. We will continue to work closely with the Areas who have yet to accept the FY98 data and rely on their cooperation to get this done.



Telecomm Changes!

Wide Area Data Network

The IHS Telecommunications team has incorporated new enhancements into the IHS wide area data network.

- ❑ The IHS Internet connection was upgraded from 1.5 Mega bits per second (MBPS) to a 6 MBPS line. Once this change was in place, many users began to see excellent response to their Internet requests.
- ❑ To further enhance Internet access, the Telecommunications group installed a Cache Server. This device stores Internet http:// requests so that other future customers will only have to access the Cache Server on the IHS network and not transverse the entire world wide Internet. This has resulted in web pages downloading 3 to 4 times faster. Additionally, this has decreased average bandwidth use by 25%.
- ❑ One final tuning task was to load filters (using industry standard site lists that came with the national firewall) to prevent certain kinds of data from entering our network (pornography, gambling, etc.). This security will not affect web searches for medical information.

These upgraded features have provided IHS with robust Internet access which we believe will meet our customer's needs.

FTS 2001 Conversion

The Telecommunications Team is also in the early stages of the FTS 2001 conversion.

The first step was to establish accounting codes for every site within the IHS. The next step, and one which might be considered the most tedious, has been completing the site surveys. This is being done by MCI personnel and involves gathering information about all communications facilities at each location. These facilities include voice, data, and video services.

The Telecommunications group has already begun ordering the MCI Federal calling cards and will soon begin sending them to our customers.

Early in calendar year 2000 the Telecommunications Team will begin the process of converting the voice lines over to MCI and the FTS 2001 contract. During this time the Team will also be converting X.25 and Frame Relay over to the new FTS 2001.

The FTS 2001 contract will provide an improvement in rates over those currently experienced under the FTS 2000 contract.

Also by using the FTS 2001 contract the IHS will be able to extend the data connections to the remote facilities using a higher bandwidth without additional costs being incurred.

What's Ahead

The Telecommunications Team is also implementing tools to ensure that the IHS network is less vulnerable to being hacked from outside the IHS. A number of packages are being implemented to assure the privacy of the IHS data.

The future looks very bright for the IHS Telecommunications. The IHS will be implementing an Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM) backbone, which will allow voice calls to traverse the network at no additional cost to the IHS customers. Additionally, video teleconferencing and telemedicine will easily be able to travel over the network.

As you all know the entire Indian Health Service voice, data, and video network was converted to be Year 2000 compliant. This conversion is now done and we are all awaiting the new year.

Millenium "Date Roll Over" Coverage

As the new century begins at midnight, January 1, 2000, staff at the Indian Health Service will be on duty to help ensure that functions are not compromised by the rollover to the new date. Staff will monitor the five IHS mission critical software systems, facility support systems, utility systems (electric and water), biomedical devices, telephone systems, wide area networks (WAN), local area networks (LAN), and computer systems. IHS has been preparing for several years to prevent problems which might occur if computers were to misread the new millennial date.

IHS monitoring will be based at national operation centers located at IHS Headquarters in Rockville, Maryland, and Albuquerque, New Mexico. Additionally, each of the twelve IHS regions will have Area level operation centers to receive information from the Area healthcare facilities. Information will be obtained locally by onsite observation and monitoring and forwarded electronically to the Area operation centers. It is then grouped and forwarded to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and

then to the White House Information Coordination Center (ICC). This becomes part of the information base that the President will use to report to the news media and the nation on the status of the health care systems.

In terms of magnitude, there are 49 inpatient facilities, 35 of which are operated directly by the IHS and 14 are operated by American Indian and Alaska Native tribes. For outpatient services, there are 214 health centers and 287 ambulatory care facilities, which include health stations, satellite clinics, and Alaska village clinics. Of the total ambulatory facilities, the IHS operates 107 and American Indian and Alaska Native tribes operate 394.

In addition, various health care and referral services are provided to Indian people away from the reservation settings through 34 urban Indian health programs. It should be noted that those facilities and services provided by American Indian and Alaska Native tribal or urban Indian health programs are not under the control of the Indian Health Service and are therefore not accountable to the Indian Health Service regarding their Y2K compliance or for reporting their Y2K status. The Indian Health Service is working closely with tribal and urban programs to assist them with any Y2K requirements they may have before or after January 1, 2000.



Hospitals which operate 24 hours a day and 365 days a year will be operational on January 1, 2000 and will submit reports at 2:00 AM local time, January 1, 2000. Health care clinics not open on January 1, 2000, but which are normally open Monday through Friday, will submit reports at noon local time January 1, 2000. All remaining facilities will report at noon of the first day of operation after the date rollover.

Contact numbers for the national operation centers are:

HQE – 301.443.2598
HQP – 505.248.4869.

News from Systems Management

New Virus Discovered

The so-called "Bubble Boy" virus which infects HTML-based email messages has been identified by an anti-virus company. For the first time it appears there is a virus that can do its damage **when you just read or preview the email!** No opening of attachments is required. For the full story check out web sites available on the CSMT Intranet site. This is just one example of the kind of viruses that are being released into the worldwide computer environment.

NT Service Pack 6a Now Available

Windows NT SP 6a is now out and can be downloaded from our FTP site. We have loaded it on a couple of machines without incident, but as always make sure you have a good backup before installing and read the README file. For additional details and "gotchas" about the service pack (sites running Exchange should carefully read this), you should check out

download links from the CSMT site on the IHS Intranet.

Exchange Server 5.5 - SP3

This service pack includes fixes to server issues that were previously available as Microsoft Quick Fix Engineering (QFE) patches. It also includes a limited number of feature enhancements and utilities. Service Pack 3 is a cumulative release that contains all of the updates for Microsoft Exchange Server 5.5 to date. Microsoft recommends installing the service pack on all Exchange Server 5.5 servers. **All IHS sites running Exchange Server 5.5 should download and install Service Pack 3.** The service pack includes Mailbox Manager Service, an Anti-Virus Interface, and Outlook 2000.

Smart Distribution List Software For Exchange

Dr. Delaney has been working with a recently developed application called "SmartDI" which allows you to define and set rules for building an Exchange distribution list, and then set that list to be rebuilt nightly or on any periodic basis. This means, for instance, that if you want a list of all mailboxes in your site, you can use this application to create one that will automatically be updated as you add or subtract mailboxes (something Exchange cannot do currently). We are looking at buying an agency-wide license so that all IHS Exchange sites will be able to use the product. Robert Montoya and Mike Martinez are working with the product now in an attempt to build an all-IHS distribution list which will provide the same kind of functionality that we had with the Banyan environment. We will let you know when it's available to all.

Check Out the RPMS Web site!

RPMS now has its very own IHS consolidated web site where you can find all there is to know about RPMS. To access the site, go to the following URL: <http://www.rpms.ihs.gov> or just go to the new IHS Internet home page under the CIO option. Here's what you'll find:

RPMS in Action: See how RPMS is used in an Indian Health facility with examples in patient care, billing and cost savings, and administration.

Support Center: Use this option to email a trouble call to the RPMS Support Center or access the NOIS database to check on a previous call.

Application Info: View descriptions of each RPMS application with links to other subject matter web pages.

Software: Download tar files of software versions, patch releases and related documentation and view verification information.

Hardware: Access updates and goodies for the RPMS hardware environment, including information about current projects and Y2K compliance.

Training: View training opportunities on the RPMS applications provided by HQW and the Phoenix Area. HQW is just beginning to set up training activities, so its calendar will contain classes as they become available.

Documentation: Access installation, user, and technical manuals in PDF format.

Online Tutorials: Access self-paced tutorials for RPMS applications. The list of available computer-based learning modules will grow as more are developed. Several are now 'in the works' and scheduled for release on the web site in year 2000.

IHS/ENVOY/VA Electronic Data Interchange

IHS/Tribal/Urban facilities can use ENVOY insurance verification, billing and electronic commerce products to assist in revenue generation efforts. Envoy is a commercial-off-the-shelf service/package that can exchange data with the RPMS system. The electronic commerce solutions that ENVOY can offer are available to the IHS under an existing contract with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

ENVOY products support eligibility verification, UB92 Electronic Claim Generation, HCFA 1500 Print Image Generation, electronic remittance advice services, and NCPDP real-time pharmacy claims. Associated ENVOY products that support these transaction sets are included in the contract:

The VeriQuest system is an integrated eligibility verification product that automatically captures eligibility data and verifies it without manual intervention, then either prints confirmation or uploads the information to the patient registration and financial systems. ENVOY's VeriQuest product will be interfaced to each hospital's patient registration system for the generation of eligibility verification requests that are triggered as each patient is keyed into the registration system. The system will automatically generate the request and print responses.

ENVOY's Diversified System Software handles remittance information, supplemental billing, and conflict checking. The DSS product will allow IHS hospitals to receive electronic remittances and post them to the RPMS system. Should IHS desire, the

system can then automatically generate secondary billing and check for 72 hour conflict for Medicare claims.

ENVOY will be responsible for maintaining the software's performance, operability, and integration with RPMS systems. They will provide customer support, Help Desk services and training on both the VeriQuest and DSS products.

ENVOY's products provide standard daily reports that include Submitter and Provider daily statistics and summaries and a daily acceptance report by provider. Its monthly reports, which run automatically, include Submitter and Provider summaries. ENVOY also provides claim status exception reports including a daily summary, an unprocessed claims report, a zero payment list, a claim settlement report, a list of those claims requiring additional information, and a claim status check.

Because ENVOY does not have complete connectivity to all Medicare, Medicaid, and Blue Cross Blue Shield plans for both UB92s and HCFA 1500s, we are also offering claims connectivity through our business partner, ECS. Tribes may opt to use the ECS system rather than ENVOY should their connectivity needs warrant a claims capture system and connectivity to ECS payers.

Here's a New In- service Training Opportunity!

The Information Technology Support Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is now providing meaningful in-service educational opportunities for Site

Managers and computer "tekkies" to upgrade and learn computer industry skills. ITSC has purchased 25 Web-based courses from **NETg**, a corporation specializing in the development, installation, and maintenance of computer-based learning tools.

IHS staff are now able to acquire training which might otherwise be unavailable at remote sites and/or to those who cannot afford to take these courses on their own. If you don't have Web access, don't worry! ITSC can send you the learning programs on compact discs (CDs) or downloadable e-mail messages.



Courses selected for fiscal year 1999-2000 can be completed individually or in the following "curricular" tracks:

PC Technician Certification

A+ Certification Classes on PC Technologies, LAN/WAN/Internet, Navigating Windows NT4.0 Work station, Customer Satisfaction.

Web site Developer/Tech

Classes in Microsoft FrontPage and JAVA Programming

Network Technician

Classes in Networking Essentials.

C++ Programmer

Two Classes in C++ Programming Fundamentals.

Network Administration and Microsoft Certified System Engineering

Classes in Networking Essentials, IBM AIX Essentials Library, and Microsoft Exchange Server.

Telecommunications Assistant

Classes in Networking Technologies, LAN/WAN Integration, and Networking Essentials.

IHS Site Manager

A+ Certification Classes on PC Technologies, LAN/WAN/Internet, Navigating Windows NT4.0 Work station, Customer Satisfaction; Networking Essentials.



Our goal is for each technical individual to achieve the level of competency that satisfies their own personal needs and/or to qualify for certification. **NETg** does NOT offer actual "certification" tests, but many of these courses and curricular tracks are approved by Microsoft and help prepare you to take recognized certifying exams. ITSC is in the process of obtaining continuing education credits (CEUs) and "certificates of completion" for those who successfully complete the courses and curricular tracks in a timely fashion.

Learning Contracts! Area Managers may parcel out the licenses among their respective technical staffs. They can monitor the numbers of participants and the courses/curricular tracks taken. It is our hope that Area Managers will develop a 'learning contract' with their staffs in which each member agrees to complete a specified number of courses or a curricular track within a specific period of time (e.g., three months).

We suggest that the learning contract include the amount of time per week that the designated staff member may devote to working on the contracted courses/curricular track. Courses can also be downloaded to laptops for use at home or during travel times.

Customize Your Learning! Each course comes with its own registration and pre and post self-test sections through which you can evaluate your own learning needs. These self-test sections make it possible for you to "test out" of

course units that contain information you already know.

The Training Team at Headquarters West is responsible for managing the system in general. The Team will monitor course registrations and completions to ensure that the course offerings are appropriate to user needs. The ITSC will alter the course offerings periodically in order to effectively manage course upgrades, changes in licensing or user needs, or variations in the technical environment.

Do a Test Drive! We urge all Area IT Managers to visit the IHS Web site and to take a "test drive" for themselves. Contact the RPMS Help Desk (505-248-4371) for the URL so that you can examine the program offerings. Area technical staff should contact their Area IT Manager for the URL.

RPMS Help Desk Activity

The national RPMS Help Desk receives calls from all areas across the country.

Here's where the incoming calls of FY99 came from:

Aberdeen	9%
Alaska	3%
Albuq	13%
Bemidji	3%
Billings	2%
Calif	8%
Nashville	4%
Navajo	32%
Oklahoma	2%
Phoenix	11%
Portland	7%
Tucson	2%
Other	4%

Help Desk staff receive your calls, enter them to the NOIS work order database, and resolve them if possible or forward them to the appropriate

technical staff member. Thereafter, Help Desk staff track the problem you called in to make sure it gets resolved and you get notified of its disposition.

During October and November, the RPMS Help Desk closed, within 2 days of their receipt, over 70% of calls received during the same period. Here's how it breaks down:

Closed Same Day:	55%
Closed in 1 Day:	11.25%
Closed in 2 Days:	5%
Closed in 3-14 Days:	28.75%

Average Length of Time Open:

Oct	4.24 Days
Nov	5.94 Days

Scheduled RPMS Training

HOW Albuquerque

The HOW Training Team is in the process of preparing class instruction for the primary RPMS applications. As soon as these classes are available, we will let you know by way of the next newsletter, the new RPMS web site, and special notices.

Phoenix Area

The Phoenix area continues to provide training experiences and has prepared the following schedule of classes for the first quarter of year 2000. Contact Ms. Jackie Bird Chief, (602) 364-5280.

January 2000

Jan 5-6 – Community Health Representative V1.0

Jan 11-14 – Third Party Billing V2.0 and Accounts Receivable V 1.0

Jan 24-28 – PCC Data Entry I and II V2.0.

February 2000

Feb 2-3 – Community Health Representative V1.0

Feb 9-11 – Beginning/Intermediate FileMan

Feb 14-16 – MSM Error Trapping/ Debutting Technical Sessions (Beginning/Intermediate FileMan Prerequisite)

Feb 17-18 – Contract Health Management Information System V3.0

March 2000

Mar 1-2 – Referred Care Information System V1.0, "Train the Trainers"

Mar 8-9 – Community Health Representative V1.0

Mar 21-22 – I H S Mental Health/ Social Services V2.0

Mar 28-30 – PCC Output Reporting (Q-Man, Case Management, PCC Management Reports)

Classes provided by the Phoenix Area take place in Phoenix.

Look for more class and registration information on the new RPMS web site.

Recent and Upcoming Events

12/17/99 - Release day for NETg Web-based Training System.

12/19/99 – Target date for release of Third Party Billing Vn. 2.4 (includes electronic HCFA-1500)

12/31/99 - Day One (Year 2000).

01/18/00 - Web Developer's meeting – Tucson, AZ.

01/31/00 – Target date for next release of Accounts Receivable application.

03/00 – ISSO Meetings; specific dates to be announced.



Spotlight on...



Adrian Lujan

**User Support Specialist,
Uniband, Inc.**

Adrian has been with Uniband since February, 1999 and has filled a newly-created position as our HQW Billing Specialist. In this capacity, Adrian has been tasked to establish and build rapport with the RPMS customer community throughout our supported Areas by providing site visits, training, and resolving customer technical calls on Third Party Billing and Accounts Receivable packages via the NOIS system.

As a member of the newly-organized Training Team, Adrian continues to enhance ASDST's position by bringing his experience and knowledge of our customer community to the training materials which are currently being developed. Also, Adrian is involved in both the Third Party Billing and the Accounts Receivable Workgroups which met most recently in November.

Here are some of the things Adrian's been up to...

Training: (Third Party Billing - ABM and Accounts Receivable - BAR)

- ❑ Three (3) National level training sessions held at HQW's Training facility.
- ❑ One (1) Bemidji Area Office training session at their facility.
- ❑ Two (2) training sessions at Navajo: one at the Navajo Area Office; one onsite at Tuba City Medical Center.
- ❑ A training session supporting CRIHB at the California Area Office in Sacramento.

Site Visits

Numerous visits to the Albuquerque Area including ACL, Albuquerque Indian Hospital, Santa Fe Indian Hospital, and Mescalero Indian Health Center.

Ongoing visits to Navajo Area, including Chinle, Crownpoint, Gallup, Kayenta, Shiprock, Tuba City, and Winslow. During his visits, Adrian works with the various business offices to enhance their use of Third Party and Accounts Receivable.

Several visits to Phoenix Area's Phoenix Indian Medical Center and a scheduled to visit the Tucson Area the week of December 13. This includes San Xavier Health Center, Santa Rosa Health Center and Sells Hospital.

On tap for the future

Adrian will be scheduling more training at HQW in the near future. He will be providing training for the Phoenix Area to be held in Reno, NV, and will be scheduling training for the Nashville Area very soon.

Now you can put a name to Adrian's great smile! Good job, Adrian!

We'd like to hear from you!

Here's how you can contact us:

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